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Lloyd Kimbrell, administrator, Bureau of Correctional Industries, Michigan Department of Corrections with the Johnson family, the first family to receive a computer under the new program.

Department of Corrections and Realtors help Habitat Homes get connected

The Michigan Department of Corrections (DOC) and Michigan State Industries (MSI), in an innovative program, are partnering with the state and local Realtor Associations to provide refurbished computers to Habitat-for-Humanity-built homes in Michigan.

The new program called *Connecting Families to Their Future* will make sure that families living in Habitat homes have a technological advantage they might not otherwise have.

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Millard Fuller, founder and president of Habitat for Humanity International, and the Johnsons.

In this program, state agencies and private organizations, including Davenport University and Gateway, donate used computers to the Department of Corrections. The computers are reconditioned by inmates at the Ryan Correctional Facility working for Michigan State Industries at a cost of \$150 per computer. The Michigan Association of Realtors pays the refurbishment expense and the computers are presented to Habitat families. Realtors across the state are donating sufficient funds to provide an MSI computer for each of the Michigan Habitat houses built this year.

“A computer will make such a big difference in my children’s education,” said Phoebe Johnson, the first Habitat homeowner to receive a computer from the new partnership. “It means so much to have so many groups involved and working to make our home an even better place to raise a family.”

Millard Fuller, founder and president, Habitat for Humanity International, also commends the partnership as well as DOC’s pioneer program which builds parts of the Habitat houses at the prison factory and transports them to the building site.

“Habitat for Humanity emphasizes partnership because we can do more as partners. With the families, Realtors and DOC partnership, we can produce a positive end result for more people. We don’t have customers, we have partners, and one of our most vital partners is the homeowners. The only thing they get when they move into their house is opportunity. It is not charity,” says Fuller.

“Adding the computer component to Habitat for Humanity is going to enrich the lives of some beautiful young people as well as ourselves,” added Fuller.

Research has shown that 25 percent of children get better grades after moving into a Habitat home and 68 percent of the families experience an income increase. Dr. Ken Bensen, president, Habitat for Humanity of Michigan (HFHM), hopes that introducing computers into the environment will strengthen these numbers even more.

“These computers will give families a great opportunity to further their children’s education especially their understanding of computers, which is so important in today’s society,” Bensen said. “We can expect to see better grades in Habitat homes because of this extraordinary state-wide community partnership between the Realtors and the Department of Corrections.”

The refurbished computers will be equipped with Windows 95 or 98, a Pentium processor or equivalent (100 MHz minimum), 32 MB of RAM, 1 GB hard drive, 3.5” (1.44 MB) floppy drive, CD-ROM drive, sound card, a monitor, a modem, speakers, a keyboard and a mouse. Only computers that meet or exceed the minimum standards set by the state or region are sold.

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Habitat Homes get connected

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“The connecting partnership will provide Habitat homes with some of the latest software and hardware technologies,” said Lloyd Kimbrell, administrator, Bureau of Correctional Industries, Michigan Department of Corrections. “Our goal isn’t just to give the family any old computer, but to give them one that can keep up with modern technology.”

In a Davenport University study of the 2,000 Michigan Habitat homeowners, 68 percent report an increase in family income, 25 percent report better grades in school, 23 percent report less sickness, 58 percent report less family conflict and 40 percent report going on to get additional education, highlighting the importance of education in the home.

“Davenport is so committed to this new program that our entire senior management team voted unanimously to provide additional computers to the Department of Corrections as needed,” said Dr. Jacqueline Taylor, vice president for diversity and cultural affairs at Davenport University. “The challenge for Habitat for Humanity is to eliminate substandard housing in the 21st century, and it takes all these partnerships to do that. The commitment crosses all lines.”

That commitment is evident with the Department of Corrections MSI program. MSI encompasses a 30,000-square foot factory, which employs 27 prisoners. It is located in the Ryan Correctional Facility in Detroit under the supervision of Superintendent David Keith and two assistants.

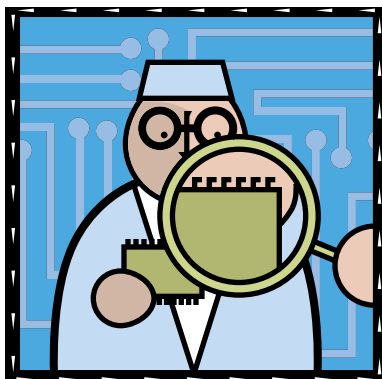
There, prisoners, under the management of their civilian bosses, clean donated computers, check them with diagnostic software and make any needed repairs. Most repair parts are salvaged from the donated machines. Working computers are matched up with working keyboards, monitors and cabling. Any needed upgrades such as additional memory, CD-ROM expansions and installation of larger hard drives are also made.

“This great program lets us train inmates in the types of jobs that have an excellent opportunity for future employment. The return rate for prisoners drops off when they are released with a marketable skill,” said Kimbrell.

Now, the operation also refurbishes and sells scanners, servers, printers and other peripheral equipment. The program has gone beyond selling computers only to schools and sells to any nonprofit or government agency including churches and community centers.

The mission of the Michigan Department of Corrections’ Prison Build Program is to assist Habitat for Humanity and other nonprofit organizations in providing housing and related products, such as computers, for low-income families through the use of inmate labor. The Prison Build Program educates and provides hands-on training to inmates in the building trades and horticulture. The inmates construct walls, cabinets, trim and other housing components; build entire homes; design and create interior products; devise landscape plans and provide the needed horticulture products; and refurbish and rebuild computers for Habitat homes.





Duane L. Waters Hospital scores high on accreditation survey

The tri-annual survey by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) awarded Duane Waters Hospital the highest preliminary scores the hospital has ever received. The Preliminary Survey Finding Report scored the hospital 94 for acute care services and 96 for extended care services out of a possible 100 points. The preliminary report is reviewed by JCAHO and a final decision is rendered in two to three weeks.

“JCAHO standards are utilized by most community hospitals and our preliminary scores are higher than many receive,” said Gerald DeVoss, hospital administrator. “Accreditation by JCAHO is a very positive reflection on the hospital and it demonstrates the high quality of health care services being provided.”

The surveyors make their visit on the 2nd or 3rd shift when administrators are not present and then conduct interviews with staff and patients.

“The patients indicated to the surveyors that they felt like they received good care and were happy with the services at Duane L. Waters Hospital,” said DeVoss. “The surveyors also seemed impressed by the dedication of the staff in spite of the many challenges faced by health care in the Department of Corrections.”

Surveyor Barbara A. Chorba, RN, of New Port Richey, Florida has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing from the University of Minnesota and a Bachelor of Professional Arts Degree from St. Joseph’s College in North Windham, Maine. Her background includes more than 30 years in administrative and management positions in hospitals, chemical and physical rehabilitation, long-term care and home-health care. She has been a full-time Joint Commission surveyor since 1991.

The second surveyor, Lee Toon, an MD from Flushings, New York earned his Bachelor Degree from New York University and his Doctor of Medicine Degree from Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He has extensive experience in the United States Air Force where he served as Chief Executive Officer of Clinic and Hospital, Vice President Medical Staff and Chief of Medical Education. Additionally, he was also clinical assistant professor of pediatrics at the Medical University of South Carolina.

“I’m very proud of the staff at Duane L. Waters. Everyone worked very hard to ensure that our services were in compliance with the JCAHO standards and everyone put their best foot forward for the survey,” added DeVoss.



Web site success stories

The department's Web site (www.michigan.gov/corrections) is currently receiving approximately three million hits per month. Visitors to the site can submit questions and comments through e-mail on a variety of topics. Some of the recent e-mails submitted have provided some outstanding success stories.

Based on information provided by an anonymous e-mailer, a parole absconder was arrested in Mt. Prospect, Illinois. The parolee was an absconder for more than five months.

As part of a criminal investigation, a special agent with the United States Secret Service was able to locate an individual that he had been looking for by using the department's Offender Tracking Information System (OTIS).

Through an OTIS search, a detective with the Edmonton Police Service in Alberta, Canada uncovered an offender who played a key role in his criminal investigation. The current prisoner had been deported from Canada in 1999 and had changed his name. Detective Vercammen said in his e-mail, "I have to say that I am very impressed with your Web page. I have all the information I need now. Thank you very much."

An anonymous e-mailer provided very specific information on the whereabouts of a parole absconder. The e-mailer also provided the best time of day to find the parolee and possible escape routes from the home that the parolee might use. Based on this information, Region III Absconder Recovery Unit (ARU) staff arrested the parolee days later. During the arrest, ARU staff discovered information on the whereabouts of the parolee's brother who was also an absconder.

A recent e-mail sent by a special agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms stated, "I wanted to let you know that I find your site to be an invaluable asset. The information that is provided is excellent. Thank you for your time and keep up the good work!"

Most Wanted Web site launched

The Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) recently launched its new "Most Wanted" Web site. The site allows citizens to submit information on fugitives at large and receive cash rewards. The site can be found by utilizing the MDOC Most Wanted Quick Link on the Michigan Department of Corrections current home page www.michigan.gov/corrections.

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Prisoner garden group donates veggies to help feed hungry

A prisoner group at the Kinross Correctional Facility, under the sponsorship of Officer James L. Couling, has donated more than 21,000 pounds of vegetables to Chippewa County organizations which feed the hungry.

Called the HOGS (or Horticulture Organic Gardeners) the group is composed of prisoners who volunteer their time to grow vegetables while becoming master gardeners and advanced master gardeners.

Couling said the “accomplishments of the HOGS are truly unique because of the thousands of volunteer hours they give.”

Produce, including vegetables, herbs, trees and flowers, is grown in a 63,000 square-foot lot inside the prison. Funding for the project comes from the Prisoner Benefit Fund.

The HOGS was the first master gardener program in any prison in the country and is only one of two prisons with an advanced master gardener program in the state. Couling works with employees of the Michigan State University Extension Services to provide the needed training to achieve certification.

Most wanted Web site

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“We have always envisioned our Web site as a valuable tool for public use. This new Most Wanted site will allow the public to assist law enforcement agencies, which includes the Michigan Department of Corrections, in apprehending fugitives,” stated MDOC director William S. Overton. “The goal is to protect the public by getting these offenders back. This site can dramatically assist in that by utilizing modern technology and providing a new avenue for citizens to offer assistance.”

The new “Most Wanted” Web site will feature up to 30 escapees and parole absconders. Last known location information, physical descriptions, sentencing information, escape location and pictures (if available) will be provided on each of the fugitives. The site will allow citizens to submit information relating to the whereabouts of the featured offenders. If an escapee is captured based on the information provided, the tipster will be eligible for a \$100 reward.

The special mailbox has received at least one tip which was forwarded to the Absconder Recovery Unit (ARU) supervisors and electronic monitoring center staff. The new “Most Wanted” web site will compliment the department’s Offender Tracking Information System (OTIS) Web site.

Central Office personnel worker earns award for efforts in processing claims

Marilyn Hancock, a personnel management specialist in the area of Workers' Compensation Claims, has earned a Meritorious Service Award for her work in handling claims through the Human Resources Management Network (HRMN) payroll/personnel system.

Hancock, whose unit in the Lansing Central Office handles all Workers' Compensation Claims, helped guide the process when it was handed back to state agencies by the Office of the State Employer (OSE).

She took the lead in learning the new process for calculating benefits under the HRMN and helped OSE when it attempted to process the claims itself.

Hancock put together a training package for MDOC personnel offices and walked them through the process. Later, when it was determined that the process should be handled in Central Office, Hancock became the resident expert on processing claims. She also worked to clear up backlogs in the system. She continues to get questions from the OSE and has helped other state agencies.

MDOC officials said Hancock's "continued hardworking attitude, knowledge and professionalism are assets to the department."



Safety concern eased with creative solution

Michigan State Industries (MSI) Supervisor Helen Piliafas from the Straits Correctional Facility recently made an advancement in safety for staff workers at MSI.

Piliafas helps supervise approximately 50 inmates each shift. The prisoners are issued tools, such as scissors and seam rippers, needed for their job. During the tool transition, staff was sometimes cut with tools that had been handled by the prisoners. This created a safety issue for the staff. It also caused problems during a mobilization due to the time required to return and clear the tools so the inmates could leave the building.

Supervisor Piliafas came up with the idea to encase as many tools as needed for each worker in individual see-through plastic cases. The inmates now return the case and a quick check confirms that all tools are accounted for. Since each tool is not handled separately, chances of injury are significantly reduced.

Implementing this idea has diminished the time required to retrieve tools as well as made the task much safer for staff.

"MSI staff are always concerned with maintaining a safe working environment," said Lloyd Kimbrell, administrator of the Bureau of Correctional Industries. "In this instance, Supervisor Piliafas used good creative thinking to help improve security and speed up a critical process. She is to be commended for thinking outside the box."

Baraga officers receive valor awards

Two officers at the Baraga Maximum Correctional Facility were given department valor awards for their actions in coming to the aid of an officer who was being assaulted by a prisoner.

Matthew Morgan, an employee at the prison since 1993, was first on the scene when Officer John Gagnon was being repeatedly struck in the head with a combination lock tied to a long length of material. Morgan jumped in to protect Gagnon from the blows and was hit and injured enough to require medical attention.

Bernard Lawry, responding to the radio transmission that staff needed help, ran to the scene, gained control of the prisoner and held him to the ground, thus stopping the assault. Lawry was also injured in the incident. He has been employed at Baraga since 1999.

Warden George Pennell said the actions of the officers “were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Michigan Department of Corrections. They put themselves at personal risk to protect fellow officers.”

Morgan returned to work soon after the incident. Lawry will be returning to work by the end of the month on light duty. Gagnon is still off and does not have an expected date of return.

Corrections staff walks away with top honors

Staff from the St Louis Correctional Facility, Mid-Michigan Correctional Facility and Pine River Correctional Facility raised \$9,400 for the Gratiot County Relay for Life. With a total of 46 participants in the August 9 and 10 event, the corrections facilities staff took top honors for the most participants and highest contributions. The Relay for Life is a fund raiser sponsored by the American Cancer Society.



Three Standish officers earn awards

Three officers from the Standish Maximum Correctional Facility earned Meritorious Service Awards for coming to the aid of a sick man and his wife.

The officers – Richard L. Rohn, James M. Draper, and Tim Fullerton – were on their way to work when they stopped at a fast food restaurant in Tawas. There, they were asked to help an elderly man who was having difficulty breathing.

Rohn, who is a CPR instructor at Standish, stayed with the man until an ambulance arrived, then went in the ambulance with the emergency technicians and helped with the manual ventilator.

The other two officers took the man’s wife and the couple’s car to the hospital. The man later died but officials at the prison said the officers portrayed a “level of professionalism and integrity that this department can be proud of.”